

# PRESIDENT CALLS TO SEE "JERRY"

Visits the Bedside of Sick  
White House Janitor.

THE AGED NEGRO IS VERY ILL

Is Assured That He Will Retain His  
Position and  
Salary.

Jerry, janitor at the White House, employed during the Administrations of eight Presidents, and now nearly seventy years old, was recently the recipient of that rarest of honors—a visit from the Chief Magistrate.

Jerry Smith, who has become, through long and faithful service, almost a part of the White House itself, has been sick a long time. He has been flat on his back in his comfortable home at 1633 Church Street northwest, since October last, but not yet have the White House employees become reconciled to his absence.

"Jerry was the life of the place," they will tell you.

Doctor Non-Committal.

The doctors won't tell Jerry what is the matter with him. "They just say, 'We'll try to help you a little bit,' and go away," says Jerry. But it is known among his friends that the old negro servant is suffering from an incurable malady—tumors, according to one physician—cancer, according to another. The trouble is in his left side, and Jerry gets little rest or sleep.

It was late in the afternoon that the White House barouche drove up to Jerry's door, accompanied by two Secret Service men and two bicycle policemen. The President and Commissioner of Corporations Garfield descended from the carriage and went up to the second story room where Jerry is confined.

For half an hour the distinguished visitors remained, chatting informally about old times, when they left for a cross-country horseback ride, the President wearing spurs and riding breeches. The news that the President was in the Smith house passed rapidly up and down the street, and presently the entire neighborhood, re-enforced by residents of other streets, lined up outside the house. The President, who was awaiting his appearance, a mob composed of white and black, lined up on either side of the street, which cheered him vociferously, waving handkerchiefs and flags.

President's Farewell.

Calling "Good-by, Jerry," in tones that all could hear, the President turned and bowed to the cheering crowd, "taking off his hat. He then drove rapidly away. "God Almighty and the President are very close to my heart," says Jerry, in speaking of the visit, and I wish for both the best of the President and the country.

"I'm a powerful miserable man, for I suffer so, but I ought to be thankful, and am, for the fact that nobody ever had more or warmer friends among the gentry."

This is confirmed by his wife, Lizzie, and the children of the White House for the past thirty-two years. Jerry claims as his own and speaks in warmest tones of Miss Nellie (Grant), Miss Kate (Hayes), and the others.

Mrs. Smith's Interest.

Several besides Commissioner Garfield keep in touch with old Jerry among them Mrs. Kate Smith, nee Hayes, wife of Lieut. Harry E. Smith, U. S. N., of the Naval Academy, who writes to him frequently. So far Jerry has kept from his beloved "Miss Kate" his serious condition.

He has her picture and the picture of her baby to show other visitors. Other pictures adorn the walls, among them portraits of General and Mrs. Grant, to whose memory he is most devoted.

It was at the beginning of Grant's second term that Jerry went to the White House. Having just completed five years' service in the navy, on the United States ship Rhode Island, he was assigned to the greenhouse and out door work. One day the man who cared for Jerry's private office was sick, and Jerry was assigned to do the work.

Twenty-four hours later the President asked for the "new man." When Jerry appeared, he abruptly told him to get ready to travel with him. The pains Jerry had taken with the general's belongings had won the old soldier's quick and lasting regard. As explained by Jerry:

"When I see anything to do, I don't run about hunting the fellow whose duty it is to do it. I just go ahead and do it."

Grant Appreciative.

Grant recognized this quality in one day's service and took Jerry with him on a tour of the Western States. From that time on Jerry remained on duty and about the house always serving in some capacity which brought him in frequent personal contact with the President, whose personal regard he never failed to win.

His last official position was janitor. As such he is still rated and draws the pay of the position.

It seems that the immediate occasion of President Roosevelt's visit to Jerry was to assure him that he need have no fear of losing his position and salary through his incapacity. Some one had started the report that the old negro had been discharged and the report had reached Jerry. The President wished to assure the old and faithful servant that he had nothing to fear.

"As long as I am at the White House I will never consent to the removal of a man who has served the Government as long and faithfully as you have," he told the prostrate man. Then he departed, leaving him cheered and contented.

Jerry, despite his age, was not a slave. He was born in Anne Arundel county, Maryland, the son of a native of St. Thomas, Danish West Indies, and a former slave of the Fenwick family. The elder Smith had persuaded John Thomas, of Baltimore, to buy Jerry's father for him, later refunding the amount paid.

But in habit and manner Jerry is a darky of the old South. He was always regarded as one of the family by the Penwicks, who treated him as they did their own slaves, and the relationship is still close.

"Southern people are the best friends the negro has," says Jerry, a sentiment approved by his wife, Lizzie.

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